LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 1541
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

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WHAT LIFE MEANS TO ME AT SEVENTY-TWO

CLARENCE DARROW

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As a matter of reason, I know that the chance of adding many years to existence at the age of seventy-two is nowhere near so great as the same chance at twenty-five. And yet, I have no doubt that a large number of the living below the age of twenty-five will reach the end before my time will come. I have no doubt that my faculties and capacities for pleasure will rapidly grow duller as the days go by. But if my joys will be fewer and less intense, so, too, will my sorrows and disappointments be less real as time goes on.

Perhaps in a few years the waning emotions that we name pleasure and pain will balance each other, and the real satisfaction of existence be as great or even greater than when life seemed so serious, grief so hopeless, and joy so unconfined.

If there is any way of knowing what age up to seventy-two brings the most satisfaction, my accumulating years have not disclosed that time of life. Living is not an intellectual process. It is an emotional venture of desires and pleasures and pains; of ambitions realized and shattered; of hopes that bore fruition and schemes that crumbled to dust. All that remains at any age is the instinctive urge to go

on; the momentum of a going concern which persists until the power is exhausted and the machine functions no more.

Life is so full of absorbing events that no one checks off the days as he goes along or estimates how much of the vital force is still in store. The flow of time cannot be measured by dots and dashes, each complete in itself. Weeks, months and years are not separately inventoried as they go by. They are not treated by the living organisms as a merchant checks up to find what the bygone period has added to his gains. Life is a continuous stream.

THE LIFE STREAM

The individual existence is a part of the ongoing power that for a longer or shorter time takes the form and substance of the special ego. When for any reason the structure no longer functions, the life stream passes into other forms and entities that are able to distribute and utilize the force which the old organism could no longer house. The individual lives so long as the organism furnishes a tolerable abiding place for the life force as it moves on. Depending upon age and health, on fineness or coarseness, on sleeping or waking, and doubtless on many things of which we are not aware, each living organism persists until its work is done. If this individual ego is the structure that now pens these lines, is there any way of telling whether life is more or less satisfactory at the age of twenty-five than at the age of seventy-two? I am able to

look back at the years that have gone by, but I can measure them only by the feelings, tastes and values of the man of seventy-two, even though I can look forward to an age still more advanced.

I can consider the pains of growing infirmities, the satisfaction of modified and tempered emotions, and the relief of shifting burdens to younger shoulders; but this I can do only with the experiences and feelings of the man of seventy-two. As I review the past I feel sure that many of the activities that in youth I counted as pleasures were not worth the cost. I feel equally certain that my deepest sorrows and regrets were exaggerated and magnified by the immature judgment and false values that moved the child and the youth, and even the matured man. As I now look back, I feel that every sensation was more or less illusory in those bygone years. From my present vantage point they appear to have been magnified, distorted or veiled by the mists and fantastic images that warped the realities into forms and fancies that could not be real. But I have lived my life and viewed my objects and dreamed my dreams with the emotions and experiences that were incident to the age and the reactions that I was passing through.

At seventy-two I am far from sure that life is less desirable than when I was in my teens. I am not convinced that the urges and emotions upon which my organism persists are in any way changed from the emotions of the early years. I well remember the time when I imagined that no pleasure would be left for

me when I should be too old to play baseball. I seemed to live through the week's drudgery in school for the Saturday afternoon when we assembled on the public square to play the longed-for game; the anticipated joy was subdued only by the fear of rain. If perchance the awaited Saturday brought the disastrous storm, my disappointment and sorrow were in no way appeased by the knowledge that other Saturdays were still in store; much less were they modified when our elders pointed out that we needed the rain to help the thirsty crops. For me and my companions there was no other time than this vanishing afternoon.

OVER THE DAM

Likewise, the childish plans for a boisterous time on the Fourth of July filled all the horizon of the youth. To be cheated on that one day admitted of no hope or extenuation. The fact that in only one more year a new Fourth of July would give us another chance in no way lightened our hopeless grief. The child came nearer the understanding of life than our elders knew. The stream was flowing on; every emotion and sensation belonged to the present and the passing moment was all there was to life. Years and experience may give one a longer look forward, and somewhat temper disappointment, but at seventy-two life has the same essential qualities as it had at seventeen. It is the passing stream that brings feelings of pleasure or pain. The water that has gone over the dam has no effect save to tame the

expectations with the memory of the experiences of the past.

At seventy-two, the stream still flows placidly on or is disturbed and interrupted in its course. At seventy-two it is the immediate sensation that brings gratification or distress. In youth, satisfaction meant joy, and disappointment meant despair. Slower heartbeats and longer acquaintance with life have measurably moderated both gladness and sorrow, and the softer, duller sensations fit the advancing age. No one can say that on the whole the life stream at seventy-two is any less desirable than it was in youth. With age, as in childhood, it is the immediate occurrence that chiefly creates the interest in living. We all know that at almost any age a toothache is hard to bear, but this consciousness does not seriously affect the enjoyable sensations of living. It is only while the toothache is present that the pain excludes the possibility of joy. All life is along the same pattern. It is the next month's rent, the need of coal, clothing and food that so often makes life a burden to the poor; when the month's rent is paid there is a period when it no longer interferes with the agreeable emotions incident to living.

WHEN WE LIE DOWN TO SLEEP

The older person finds contentment and happiness in friends who help him enjoy the evenings now at hand. Beguiled by fond friends and interesting discussions that would have been stupid in youth, time passes all too

quickly, and there follows the feeling of relief at the approaching sleep. At an advanced age one does not eat so much as he once did, and the food is not quite the same, but the gratification of the palate is not destroyed by age.

It is true that as we grow older much of our living comes to be almost automatic. We give an hour in the morning to the reading of a newspaper which at one stage of our life would not have been worth the while. We read it carefully, not omitting the obituary notices, now wont to record familiar names. These we can scan with scarce a shudder, for the living organism cannot imagine itself as dead; even if it could really vision Nirvana, it would bring only a feeling of rest and peace.

I am inclined to believe that very few who reach mature years are harassed by any thoughts of future punishment. Life has taught the pilgrim the frailty of human judgment, the prevalence of error, the shortness of human foresight, the intricate and impenetrable web of fate that enmeshes all. It has made him tolerant and kindly and understanding. It has taught him not to judge or condemn. It does not matter what the religious faith may be, he cannot imagine a God with less understanding and charity than he has himself.

I cannot see that either the pains or satisfactions incident to life are greatly changed with the passing years. The tired youth and the weary old man alike turn gladly to their beds at night and welcome the kindly, soothing embrace of sleep; neither in youth nor old age is anything quite so satisfying after

a day of activity as the consciousness of softly approaching sleep. I cannot avoid the conclusion that, as on-coming drowsiness at night is, after all, the most gratifying of sensations, so the slowly soothing anesthesia that precedes the inevitable end should be the most welcome sensation following on an active life.

As a child I liked to run and jump in the open field. I liked it for the sheer joy of the outdoors, the fresh air and the coursing blood born of activity and life. I still love the fresh air and the green grass and trees and the great outdoors. True, I walk instead of run. I no longer jump as I was wont to do. A park bench furnishes every opportunity to see the trees and grass, and feel the fresh, invigorating air that blows from the lake, bringing the same sensation that it did long years ago. As a boy at my tasks, or kept indoors by rain, I felt joy when the sky was clearing and I knew that I could soon be back in the outdoor world.

As an old man I look with pleasure at the melting snow, the budding trees and the manifold promises that the spring still holds out to brighten life. At any and all ages I have enjoyed and still enjoy the companionship of friends. Perhaps there is no other emotion quite so gratifying as that which comes through the association of those with whom we blend. In the company of those we love, even conversation is not needful; there are understanding and regard and sympathy which radiate alike in silence and chatter. As the years pile one upon another, this pleasure does not wane.

Is seems to develop and take the place of others that have fled forever. When one grows old he is lucky if he can understand and sympathize with the young. Old friends may die and leave you forsaken of their companionship, but the children come on eternally. Assume that I may live eight or ten years longer—which is more than many of the young can survive—that eight or ten years will bring a great many pleasant meetings, a great many communions with congenial friends, with pleasures just as real as those in the years gone by. I probably shall have many agreeable realizations of approaching sleep, many wakings in the morning with reinvigorated energies, many breakfasts and dinners, many meetings and rare hours with those that I love.

I still like travel; at least before I go away I have the feeling that I shall enjoy the change; even if my journey proves disappointing and the new prospect does not fulfill anticipation and I pine for the familiar faces of old-time friends, I still can find pleasure in anticipating my return. Gratification is made up not alone of the sensations that we really feel at the fulfillment of an anticipated joy; a part, and doubtless the largest part, comes from the hopes and expectations of wishes that never meet fruition. For all practical purposes the dream is the reality, and whatever the age, no fulfillment entirely completes the dream.

AIR CASTLES FOR YOUNG AND OLD

The eyes of the mind look out through magnified lenses. Neither the trouble that we

fear nor the joy that we expect is as far removed from the commonplace as time and distance and imagination made it seem to be.

It is the young who marvel over how life can hold any satisfaction to those who, from the nature of things, have almost reached their journey's end. The young can no more view life through the halting emotions of the old than can the aged again realize the pleasures that exhilarate the youth. Neither can the old sympathize with the impatience of youth which comes from the disappointed dreams and desires of the young. Nature is not so unkind as she seems to be. Automatically she brings the individual structures into harmony with failing emotions and changing environment. Nature does not temper the wind to the shorn lamb, but she tempers the shorn lamb to the wind.

Age does not even destroy all dreams and ambitions. Whatever the time or station of life, and whatever the physical structure that seems to be one's home, still from the beginning to the end we really live in air castles built from hopes and fears, from visions and from dreams. The castles of youth are high and wide, the gates are guarded by giants and ogres. There are battlements to scale and drawbridges to cross, and moral combats that must be waged ere the victory is won. The castles of age are covered with ivy and lichen, the gentle breeze comes through the trees across a peaceful lake, and the grateful sun warms us as we sit in an armchair at the window and alternately read and doze the time away.

We do not resign ourselves to idleness; there is much work still to do. Most of our expected achievements are yet unaccomplished, and many of them scarcely begun. We will commence them tomorrow and finish them within the year. What matters it whether our dreams come true or not? They are essentially true while they have the reality to move our consciousness, and when this period goes by, it does not matter whether the work is finished or whether it ever was begun.

The human mind lends itself to ambitions, and every period of life has its fitting desire. The man who has been interested in the show as it passed by, who has tried to keep in touch with the world, has accumulated opinions, beliefs, ideas, or at least habits of thought. All of us are, for some mysterious reason, anxious to have others see the world as the world seems to us. I am satisfied that all men are propagandists. The possession of an idea or opinion somehow generates the emotion to urge it on someone else and make him see the truth as we see the truth. We are like a hen which announces loudly to the universe that she has laid an egg. It is most likely important only to the individual hen, but the nature of the emotion creates the zest for the utterance. All of us are eager that others shall see and feel what we see and feel. This emotion furnishes not only an active interest in life but a sense of duty; no doubt it is a mistaken sense, but it helps us keep our interest in the passing show.

As a propagandist, I see no chance to grow

weary of life. I am interested in too many questions that concern the existence and activity of the human race. Not only am I interested in these questions but, for some reason or other, I almost always find myself disagreeing with the crowd. From experience I know how few men ever care to investigate any subject and how few honest opinions are of any value. I also know the strong tendency that most people have to go with the crowd. Social ambitions, ease of mind, business interests and most of the motives that move men induce them to do what others do, believe as others believe, and think the thoughts that others think, if any. Only a few men have ever studied any subject carefully, and in all fields of activity we are obliged to rely upon the experts for dependable information. This fact is one reason why most people align themselves with the majority. It is always the easiest and safest way. The majority have the wealth and power and standing which attract the masses of men to the different opinions, creeds and causes which move men.

A STANDARD BEARER OF LOST CAUSES

I have long stood with the minority on almost every question that divides men. I also know that the truth is many-sided and relative and shifting, and yet it seldom occurs to me that any of my opinions can be wrong. I know by the law of chances that all of them cannot be right, but yet, when any particular view is challenged, I feel sure that my view on that matter is beyond dispute. As a prop-

agandist I realize the work that I shall always find to do. No matter how long I live, I shall still be seeking to convert a blind and credulous people to abandon their idols and join the thin ranks of the minority and help bear its soiled and tattered banner to ultimate victory. Still, I know that I shall fail. I know that if perchance the majority could be ranged on my side, it would be as intolerant and senseless as majorities have always been.

Of course age has its discomforts. It brings its manifold aches and miseries to body and mind. It brings loneliness as friends and acquaintances drop out of the field and leave one to march alone. In my weaker moments the power and bigotry of the crowd make me shrink and tremble and grow afraid. They even make me doubt myself. Often and often as I fight to defeat for a hopeless cause, I look at the triumphant majority that, with glee and infinite assurance, marches by, and ask myself why I cannot be with them. After all, would it not be better to hunt with the cruel, barking hounds than to run with the timid, frightened hare? The only reason why I do not join the pack is because my human structure is not adjusted to the easier way of life. To me, the easiest way is the hardest way.

If one has taken his place with the minority, if he has defied the crowd, if he has determined to go alone, he must fearlessly content himself with his way of life. He cannot pity himself. He must take life as it comes, without regret or complaint.

ANNOYANCES IN THE MAIL BAG

Each age has its special burdens. Often these burdens come from little things scarcely worth noticing. In old age, as in youth, slight affairs are sometimes as trying as serious ones. One of my greatest crosses is my daily mail. It brings its inevitable grist of annoyance and disillusion. It ought to be impossible for an active man who has lived a full life to find new annoyances at seventy-two, but each day brings these at whatever age, and the postman does his share on every round. The old are naturally grateful for kind letters from friends and well-wishers who express appreciation, approval or gratification over things one has done or tried to do; but even these letters should not be long, for at seventy-two no one can possibly complete all the tasks that he has set out to do. So, without the encouragement of friends life would be hard and bleak.

But there are letters with requests for money which one cannot give; for employment that is still harder to furnish or find; letters from the poor and unfortunate in sordid homes and in hospitals, asylums and prisons; letters from the families of victims waiting and checking off the days before a loved one shall be led out and put to death by the state. In the eyes of a mother, wife or friend, the victim is not the person that the public hates. Seldom is there any chance to help.

Then there are the letters from those who wish to save my soul. These are generally

written by kindly, human men and women who want to do me good. Usually they are written with the utmost care and with the well-meant desire to save me from the wrath of an angry God. Oh course, they should save their time, and mine. If I believed in such a God I should go insane.

Not all the letters are kindly. Every crank can write. One can read their letters without opening the envelopes.

There are others who write abusive letters for the joy they get in the thought that these cruel messages give me pain. Of course, they fall short of their mission, for they are never read. Life is harsh enough without seeking hurts.

Books, too, arrive in the mails; most of them sent with the kindliest intentions, and sometimes the request that I may say a word about them that will help their sale, which often I would like to grant, but when can I possibly find time to read them all? All my life I have loved books and have been an industrious reader, and have never been able to peruse more than a small fraction of the books that I want and still expect to read. Many unpublished manuscripts also clutter my mail. Some of them are well done, I hope; some are from strangers, some from friends: some ask me to read their books and criticize them—by which they mean praise them—and often I am asked to write a preface. What can they be thinking of? Do they not know that I am seventy-two years old?

And yet age has its advantages too. I lie in bed in the morning as late as I wish or, rather, as long as there is any possible chance of falling into another nap. Why should I dread death, when I never miss a chance to sleep, and am only annoyed because I waken too soon?

After an active existence, it is really a relief to find the regular daily burdens lifted from the tired shoulders. Take it all in all, the Indian summer is very grateful and soothing to a body that really longs for rest. The little child is amused by what his elders believe are senseless toys. These fill the small horizon that his few years have given him to see and understand. In old age, once more the little things stir the feelings that have been so worn by time and sensations that the slightest inducement makes the nerves vibrate like a leaf in the November wind.

No one can reach the age of seventy-two without thinking of the great change which must overtake him in so short a time. As with all others who ever lived, this consciousness has often been active in my life. I am sure that the prospect of death disturbed me more profoundly when I was young than it does today. This was always borne upon me with the passing of someone near to me, and the consciousness that my father or my mother or someone else that I loved might soon meet the same inevitable fate.

I am aware that passing years blunt the sensibilities and prepare the victim for an unavoidable tragedy that is incident to life. It

seems to give me only small concern. The living cannot imagine themselves as dead. The belief in an inevitable end can affect only the mind, and this is not vital in the processes of life. Thanks to my father and mother, I never believed in an angry God who would torture me or anyone in eternal hell. I do not believe in wrath or vengeance. I have more and more come to the firm conviction that each life is simply a short individual expression, and that it soon sinks back into the great reservoir of force, where memory and individual consciousness are at an end. I am not troubled by hopes, and still less by fears. I have taken life as it came, doing the best I could with its manifold phases, and feel sure that I shall meet final dissolution without fear or serious regret.

WHAT I THINK OF DARROW AT SEVENTY-TWO

E. HALDEMAN-JULIUS

It is with the bearing of a philosopher that Clarence Darrow surveys life from the vantage point of his seventy-second birthday. His philosophy is much the same as it was a quarter of a century ago when he wrote *Farmington* (Big Blue Book No. 49)—a philosophy of realism made gentle by a profound sympathy with his fellow men, by an unwillingness to place bitter emphasis upon the things that divide men in beliefs and interests, by a toleration that is rooted in an essential abiding skepticism. He is as free from illusions as any man living. He offers none of the sentimental babble that men in full years usually are prone to, thinking they must say a last word to signify their respectable adherence to all the popular fictions. To be sure, Darrow is a man of deep and true feeling; in the vein of mellow emotional commentary on life he is more appealing than any other man; but he has not let his feeling shape his fundamental thought about life—on the contrary it is his clarity (at times a cynical clarity) of viewpoint which deepens his sympathy for the pawns of a brief and deceptive life. His emotions are those of a kindly, tolerant, but disillusioned man.

When I say that he is disillusioned I do not mean that he is unhappy or soured; but, if any-

thing, he has grown kindlier as he has grown older. And although one of his most familiar affirmations is that life is not worth living—which he upholds from a philosophic rather than a personal point of view—I can think of no one who has had a more interesting life than Clarence Darrow. He has been fortunate in his gifts and he has been able to exercise them successfully and to command both moderate fortune and fame that is unique. He has had a very sensitive capacity for getting the most out of life, for enjoying as well as understanding life—a vigorous man, strong in body and mind, and blessed with an unusual sense of humor. That last is an important gift. It has enabled Darrow to be cynical without being bitter and to dismiss the common sentimental illusions with an appropriate smile, yet with a feeling of pity for those who cling rather pathetically to such sorry illusions amid the struggle and confusion of things. He feels at once the tragedy and the mockery and the high comedy of life, yet he is aware at the same time of its necessary commonplaceness for most of us.

To be sure, in this retrospect at seventy-two Darrow is mild in his expression. For that matter, he has always had a light touch. He suggests a good deal more than he directly says. There is, however, no mistaking the skeptical implications of his philosophy. He offers no cheap "inspiration" to those who want something beyond life to justify life. Philosophically, the theme of his essay, implicit from first to last, is that life is just living and that there is no great purpose or wonderful divine

scheme in it. There are only such temporary and limited purposes as man himself invents.

Life is the sum of sensations that each of us has during his few years on earth. We do our work as best we can; we take, if we are wise, the pleasures that are within our reach; we have our dreams too but they are dreams and hopes of earthly joy and fame and self-realization; and whether our dreams come true or not, our end will be the same and it will be soon. As individuals, how foolishly egotistic we must be to think that some Power or Presence not of earth watches over us! We are of course important to ourselves and in a less degree to our friends. That is the natural expression of our strong love of life. For the urgent, desirous reality of life is not affected by this question of a mystic purpose that is working out to some great end for humanity. Individually, what could such a purpose mean to us? Who can know what it is? Who can prove it? Who can give expression to it save in terms of his human desires and opinions? It is enough to know that we are alive and our wisdom lies in making life yield us the best harvest of experience.

We cannot even say that life is the *sum* of our sensations. At no moment can a man say that he possesses really and consciously the whole of his experience. At seventy-two Darrow confesses that he cannot realize himself as the young Darrow or the middle-aged Darrow or the Darrow of ten years ago. We forget much that has happened to us and that at the time was very real; some things we hold in vague

remembrance but to say that they belong to us—that they are actually a part of us—is to use merely an idle form of words; even in our clearest recollection of the past there is the feeling of unreality, and the future is more or less of a gamble upon which certainly we cannot draw in advance.

We live, as Darrow says, in the sensations of the present. That is all and, as we have no choice, it must be enough. It is enough for a man who faces life with a healthy realism. Why sigh for immortality? Life is our immediate concern. Why hug to ourselves the illusion of a mystic purpose in life? There are human aims and interests that are real enough for us while we live—and when we are dead we shall be rid of all vexatious questionings and strivings.

This philosophy of simple close-to-earth realism does not mean that we are to live aimlessly. No man *could* do that, although some men manage their lives better than other men do. The instinct of self-preservation supplies all life with a natural and strong aim. A good deal of our life is spent in working, eating, sleeping and performing the simplest physical functions so that we may keep on living. The life within us takes the shape of various natural desires, and we put forth great efforts to satisfy these desires. And how great a portion of life is made up of trifles, which nevertheless as they present themselves, so familiarly and unceasingly, are of undoubted importance to us!

For most of us life is not a breathless ro-

mance nor a tale of great deeds. Even so, if we have good health and good humor we can still enjoy the old familiar round and get a thrill out of the mere sensation of being alive. It is not a thrill that we have continuously nor always in the same degree. It does seem a shame that, brief as life is, we cannot feel always the most intense, delightful sensations. But we are often dull. We cannot escape times of boredom, just as each of us is certain to know hours of distress. We grow tired too, but then rest and sleep are more desirable than the most attractive experiences the imagination can picture. We gladly sacrifice about eight hours consciousness out of each twenty-four hours, so that we can keep going during the other sixteen hours. And all too often our sixteen-hour day of consciousness seems long and weary.

But, the reader may object, we have ideals, duties, moral principles. The only way that we can judge these, however, is by their possible usefulness for living. These ideals and purposes are quite human in origin. After all, they too represent—just as work and food and sleep represent—the efforts of men to continue living in the most agreeable manner. Quite often these ideals have been a terrible detriment to mankind. They have cost blood and tears in payment for folly. And the purposes of men, separated by race and class and country, are provocative of sharp conflicts. But the man who believes in an ideal, however false or dangerous it may be, is convinced that his ideal is better for life. And each individual or group

considers that its own purposes are right and good, even though they are strongly disputed by other individuals or groups. It is all a tangle of human efforts and desires, but there is no great supreme purpose decreed from some mysterious throne of authority hidden somewhere in the universe. Men work out their own purposes as they go along, and they have made blunders enough in all conscience. Ideals have been very misleading, when they have been formed without realistic consideration. We cannot easily agree about ideals; it is certain, however, that they have only a human significance and must be judged by their very tangible results here and now. The only purpose in life is that of making life more agreeable—that of man adjusting himself to his world. In social organization, we still disagree about how this is to be done. Individually, our purposes vary a great deal. We do not all want precisely the same things in life.

This notion that life has a purpose, infinite and absolute, beyond the finite aims that are connected with the living of life, is of course a product of the religious mind. It postulates belief in a God. For if life has a purpose then it must be assumed that a God has decided upon that purpose and is carrying it forward. I say "assumed": for the whole thing is pure assumption which is made ridiculous when one takes a plain view of the facts. It is preposterous to try to explain the blunders and conflicts of men in the unhappy light of history by the theory of a divine intelligence managing the show; not to speak of the ghastliness of evolu-

tionary processes long ages before human life appeared. Life is all too evidently a working of the blind, inexorable forces of nature. True, man has learned scientifically how to use his own greater power and safety; still he cannot escape from nature in the long run, while his inventions are the fruit of his own learning and efforts, without help from God. Nowhere in evolution, nowhere in the history of man, do we find trace of any but intelligible (yet not intelligently ordered) natural forces and the strife of human interests and the devolopment of human purposes, good and bad and indifferent, for the living of life. The only purpose that life can be said to have is to live and to produce more life. And that is not so much a purpose as an instinctive condition of life. We are here because we are here, and we have a lively desire to stay here—until, as Darrow reminds us, the body-machine wears out and we have not the energy to go on living.

This will to live, which is expressed in the most simple and in the most elaborate of our human aims and standards, is sufficient. For the will to live includes the effort to understand life, to beautify it, to enlarge it and organize it. The idea (essentially religious) of a purpose in life is too vague an assumption to have much practical force. Excluding all idea of such a purpose, there is a plenty of inspiration in the natural vigor of life itself and in the realistic aims that we can immediately see and understand. If consciousness of such a purpose were necessary to life, it is reasonable to suppose that it would be made clear beyond dis-

pute; but it is the most thoughtful man, who might be expected to serve as the most valuable agent of such a purpose, who easily perceives that it is a fallacy and turns to ideas and objects that are real. Evidently it has not been the conviction that he has been the instrument of such a mysterious, perfect purpose that has animated Clarence Darrow in his brilliant career. He has dreamed and achieved a great deal more than the average man, because for him that has been the most interesting, expressive way to live. The realization indeed that all of life for us is here and now, that the only purpose in life is supplied by ourselves—by our own desires and aims—makes the very strongest incentive to live as fully and intelligently as we can while we are here. It is a very foolish man who worries and neglects to make use of the day because he knows the day will pass. It is equally foolish—and equally at variance with the vivid, natural will to live—for a man to despair and make no effort and have no hope nor ambition in life because he knows that death will end the show. It is a good, at least an interesting, show while it lasts.

The greatest purposes of men have their inspiration in the improvement of this life. It is, after all, for the uses of this life and without regard to any so-called "higher purpose" that man accumulates knowledge, that he concerns himself with social ideals, that he cherishes the finer emotions, that he makes for himself certain ethical values. The explanation of life, the purpose of life, the rewards (as well

as the penalties) of life are found in life itself. Beyond this human scene and our finite human interests it is impossible to go. We shall do better, then, if we devote more intelligence and good will to the business of living and forget our vain speculations about a mystic purpose in life. This is an atheistic philosophy, but it is sensible and humane. It is the realist like Darrow who offers us the most useful and stimulating reflections because he is speaking not as a false, illusive oracle but as a clear and sympathetic observer of life.

And he is such a tolerant observer. He does not blame men for their illusions nor their sad and foolish prejudices, although he has for many years taken every opportunity to express a more civilized viewpoint. If he is pessimistic in his impersonal outlook upon life (personally he has an unusual capacity for enjoying life), it is not a crabbed killjoy pessimism but a philosophy that would encourage every slightest chance to grasp a bit of happiness—a pessimism (or, more fairly, a realism) that in realizing the limitations of life is thereby the more impelled to use life fully within these limits. In fact, it is an objection to idealism of the religious or metaphysical kind that it often cheats men so that they do not enjoy life in a simple, natural way; they are so burdened with the idea of a "higher purpose" and with notions of duty that have no realistic human sanction that they miss a great deal in life. Like Omar, like all great humanists and realists, Darrow's message at seventy-two is: *The purpose of life is living and, as a part of this purpose, making*

life more livable for ourselves and our fellow men.

Nor is Darrow foolish or dogmatic enough to say precisely how anyone else should live. He believes thoroughly in freedom and toleration. He realizes that no man can absolutely guide another nor impose upon another his own feelings and aims. The attempt to do so has unhappy consequences. To be sure, we can learn from one another. We can make use of our common heritage of wisdom. We are fortunately able to make use of the knowledge and facilities of civilization. Many things, however, and the simplest ones too, we must learn by experience. Our mistakes teach us the most impressive lessons; and if often we refuse to learn, probably it is because our mistakes are so agreeable. Perhaps they are not really mistakes after all, if we rid ourselves of the notion that there is a hard-and-fast, perfect, correct, dutiful way to live, if we remind ourselves that the greatest thing in life is interesting and pleasurable experience.

Anyway there is an excessive and confusing tendency to preach about the moral duties of behavior. There are too many men who have a readiness to instruct others, dogmatically, how they should live. It has always been assumed as a special prerogative of the elders to offer plans and specifications for the guidance of the young.

It is nicely characteristic of Darrow that he avoids talking down to youth as if from a superior height and pointing out to them solemnly, all-wisely, the way in which they

should go. He knows what a feeble influence such cut-and-dried copybook admonitions have, how egotistic and unreal they are, and how deceptively they are the product of a particular age of sensations. Darrow knows that childhood, youth, early manhood, middle life, and old age have each their periodic pleasures, follies, and standards of judgment. And he is too wise to insist that one period of life should be guided by the feelings and values of another period. Youth cannot bring age back to its own daring and vigor and, often, recklessness. Nor can age put its own restraints, which are biological rather than moral, upon youth. A good deal of what is called the wisdom of age is simply the product of slower, tamer blood and the outgrowing of younger desires. Always older men have counseled youth to deny themselves the very experiences which they (older men) took eagerly when they were young. One cannot possibly make the age of twenty-five have the same impulses of living as the age of seventy-two.

And Darrow has the good sense not to try. He knows that youth will be served and he is even glad that it is so. Of course, in looking back he can understand that the hopes and disappointments of his youth were not as serious as they seemed to him then. Yet if he were set back at that young age, he would have precisely the same viewpoint. He would feel as strongly and dare as greatly—and he would make the same mistakes.

Life, says Darrow philosophically, is but a stream of sensations. We live in the present

and each day we leave something behind forever. At maturity we put away childish things but we have the impulses of youth. In middle age we are sobered and restrained. We have grown tired of activities that a few years before were very exciting and appealing. We have become more conscious of the passing of life and have been perforce impressed with greater responsibilities. As we still grow older, we take life more quietly, our desires are fewer and simpler, and we are more apt to moralize for the benefit of the young about the folly of doing this and that—a kind of "morality" which is explained, of course, by lack of desire. A similar urge of "morality" is that which impels men at whatever age to condemn or to minimize the importance of pleasures which have no appeal for them, while rationalizing with no less conviction the pleasures which they find seductive. They are the men who

> Compound for sins they are inclined to
> By damning those they have no mind to.

Of course, Darrow is too intelligent to talk about "sins". A good deal of what is called "sinning" is but the natural expression of the ardency of youth and the inevitable desire of youth to experiment; and moralists, whether truly self-denying or expressing merely a lack of desire (the latter being the case with aged moralists), preach vainly against this assertion of youthfulness. Life is too short for us to bother about denials and hesitations of petty morality, which is after all not really morality

but puritanism, which in turn comes from religion. It is best to enjoy life in a perfectly natural way—being careful only that one is not hurtful or unfair to others—each according to his temperament and his age and, of course, his opportunities. Virtue often is a lack of opportunity, just as the virtue of age is often no more than a lack of desire.

Each period of life has its own tempo and general mode of behavior. At seventy-two Darrow lives in the present, just as he did at twenty-five: it has simply changed, not in the fulfillment of any extra-mundane purpose nor in the light of morality or idealism, but as the natural result of years, following the tendency of all life. He is, to be sure, fortunate in preserving a keen, intelligent interest in life: he is gifted with more vision and energy, also with more toleration—more sympathy with other periods of life—than men usually are at his age. Physically and mentally, Clarence Darrow is an exceptional man. He does not bewail the years that are gone nor does he boast of the superior wisdom and virtue of age. He knows that wisdom and virtue are relative, and that what is wisdom for age would be unnaturalness for youth. The individual changes and at length dies, but life goes on. Age is more given to looking backward, youth is more given to looking forward, yet both youth and age really live in the present.

Perhaps the finest thing about Darrow at seventy-two is his attitude toward death. He faces death, as he has faced life, without illusion and without fear. He does not de-

ceive himself with hope of a future life nor is he at all shaken by threats of a wrath to come. Fanatics only annoy him when they try to "save his soul": that has always seemed to him a poor, shadowy fiction, certainly having no touch with reality. His business is living, according to the quiet and mellow inclinations of seventy-two, and when he is dead he will be concerned with nothing. And death, he suggests, when it comes naturally in the fullness of years, may be as welcome as sleep. Such is life—such is death—and Clarence Darrow is brave enough and honest enough to recognize the truth. He is too intelligent to comfort himself with lies; and indeed truth, whether good or bad, has been one of his main interests in life. At seventy-two, Clarence Darrow would agree with Omar, who is one of his favorite poets:

The Moving Finger writes, and having writ
Moves on: nor all your piety nor wit
  Can lure it back to cancel half a line
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.

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